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ABSTRACT

The position of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA) on issues of shared decision making and administration in the public schools is examined in this report. Methodology involved telephone interviews with one AFT and one NEA representative on the following issues: decision making and forms of control; needed organizational changes; necessary personnel attributes; and administrator preparation programs. Findings indicate that both organizations view teacher participation as a prerequisite for creating effective student development programs. Both stress the need for changes in the roles of superintendents, school boards, school organization, teachers, and principals and emphasize the development of reflective practice in administrator preparation programs. The recommendation is made for addressing changes necessary for restructuring at the programmatic level. A copy of the interview schedule is included. (LMI)

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Perspectives of AFT and NEA on the Role of Administration and Administrator Preparation Programs

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The decade of the eighties will likely be remembered as one in which issues of public schooling occupied the spotlight of public concern. At present public attention is beginning to shift in other directions, for example the reunification of Germany, the restructuring of Soviet society, domestic economic decline, instability in the Middle-East. While attention may be shifting, the problems facing education remain. One problem is determining the most effective form of school organizational structure and the strategies likely to promote adoption of effective forms. This is a complex problem.

One way to approach this problem is to recognize that schooling is a goal oriented, social service institution. One may then assume the existence, or at least the desirability, of a functional relationship between school goals, the technology to achieve those goals and facilitating organizational structures. Within this framework one may consider that educational reform efforts of the early eighties were primarily oriented toward the technological level. Traditional academic, vocational, civic, and personal goals of schooling were not subject to general critique; likewise, the existing structure of bureaucratic organization and political governance was generally deemed appropriate. Goals and organizational structure might require fine tuning, but by and large the task was defined as doing more and better what schools had traditionally done.

By the mid-eighties the emphasis of school reform began to shift toward critique of organizational structures. Issues of site-based management, teacher empowerment and professionalism rose to the fore. In many ways this represents an advance over previous

reform agendas because it allows greater reflection upon issues of goals and technology. But to the extent that opportunities for such reflection are ignored, one should not expect significant improvement in schooling generally. Nevertheless, to the extent that school reform efforts are moving in the direction of school restructuring it is necessary to inquire into the nature of school roles and of the attributes of persons occupying those roles that will be required to attain the schools desired for the 21st century. This report addresses one limited aspect of such an inquiry. That is, to determine the position of the AFT and NEA on issues of shared decision making and administration in schools.

METHODS

This study is not intended to provide an exhaustive account of AFT and NEA positions, but rather to determine current thinking on these issues. One reason for this more modest purpose is that neither the AFT nor the NEA have adopted strong, formal positions on site-based management, shared decision making, and the nature of administration. Instead both organizations are in the process of developing perspectives.

The strategy adopted to gather information was to call the office of Albert Shankar, president of the AFT, and Kieth Geiger, president of the NEA, to explain the purpose of the study and to speak with someone in a position to respond to these questions. Within both organizations internal discussion occurred and I was ultimately directed to speak with Bruce Goldberg, Co-Director of the AFT Center for Restructuring, and Sharon Robinson, Director of the NEA National Center for Innovation. While this is admittedly a very small sample, these persons are knowledgeable about, and have the authority to express, current organizational positions. Nevertheless, through-out this report we will attribute statements to Mr. Goldberg and Ms. Robinson rather than to the AFT and NEA in recognition of the limited data base.

Conversation with Mr. Goldberg and Ms. Robinson occurred by telephone. In both cases the conversation lasted approximately 45

minutes. Written record of the conversation was generated from notes produced during the interview. While both Mr. Goldberg and Ms. Robinson were informed of the questions included on the interview schedule (attached) the conversation did not proceed in a simple question and answer format. Rather the conversation was more wide ranging, allowing the respondents to reveal those aspects of concern which were primary to them. This approach was based on the belief that the relative emphasis and interest in particular issues was as revealing of positions as was the response to a specific item. In both cases the respondents appeared somewhat more interested in addressing general philosophical and conceptual issues surrounding decision types and organizational changes than in addressing specific issues related to personnel attributes and academic preparation.

FINDINGS

The positions expressed by Mr. Goldberg and Ms. Robinson were generally quite similar on most issues. What differences exist tended to be of degree or emphasis. In reporting the findings I have attempted to provide rather extended summary of each persons position so that the reader may gain a sense of the nature of the conversation. In order to avoid repetition, however, where Mr. Goldberg and Ms. Robinson express essentially the same sentiment I present only one persons view and then note differences from that view by the other. In addition because respondents addressed the interview questions by thematic area rather than question item by item I have adopted a similar strategy in reporting.

Decision Types and Forms of Control

Mr. Goldberg noted that thinking about shared decision making should be placed in the larger context of general school restructuring. In thinking about restructuring one should consider three overlapping "spheres of influence" or dimensions of schooling. The first is that a school should be a Center of Inquiry. Students may be considered as workers in such a center, with teachers considered to be the supervisors and facilitators of student work, as

researchers themselves, and as those best able to induct new teachers into the norms of ongoing inquiry. Second, the school should be a Center of Community. The concept of community focuses attention upon the affective dimensions of schooling and that one must attend to sociological factors associated with efforts to achieve goals of socialization and enculturation, as well as academics. By community is also meant the schools relationship with other community groups. The school's efforts to influence children are enmeshed within a larger network of community influences, all of which must be integrated for schooling to be effective. Finally the school should be a Center of Continuity. By continuity is meant the structural relationships between the activities of schooling and later activities of labor force participation and higher education.

In order to accomplish these objectives of Inquiry, Community and Continuity it is necessary for teachers to participate fully in the decision making processes of the school. Such participation is necessary in order to develop an affective sense of knowledge and participation; that is a sense of being a fully enfranchised member of the school community. But equally important it is necessary for teachers to develop depth of understanding of total school processes so that individual decisions related to curriculum and pedagogy may contribute to an integrated program of student intellectual and social development. Those persons responsible for implementing policy decisions need to understand the broad conceptual rationale behind those decisions. Development of conceptual understanding is very difficult to accomplish unless persons are involved at the level of policy formation.

Thus the position of AFT is that teachers should have the opportunity, and should take advantage of those opportunities, to participate in all decisions affecting the operation of the school. This would include the decision arenas of curriculum and pedagogy in which teachers currently possess considerable expertise as well as arenas traditionally associated with management in which many

teachers may lack current expertise. Among the range of decisions teachers should be engaged in considering are: budgets, staffing, personnel, school goals and objectives, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. At present the greatest need organizationally is to integrate consideration of instruction, curriculum and governance. Without decisional participation by teachers such integration is unlikely to occur at the operational level. Instead one will find integration occurring among central office administrators in the form of developing formal-rational organizational structures, but a breakdown of these plans at the operational level as plans are disseminated to the schools for actual implementation.

The type and degree of control teachers might exercise over school level managerial and instructional decisions may be expected to vary from one situation to another, and over time within the same school district. Moreover, one may anticipate personal differences in teachers desire for participation. The objective, however, should be to expand the range and degree of involvement of teachers in all aspects of school operations.

Ms. Robinson expressed similar sentiments but did not offer a particular vision for the schools equivalent to the inquiry, community, continuity theme described by Mr. Goldberg. An important theme identified by Ms. Robinson, however, is that teachers are not simply hired hands in the school. Rather, in large part, parents, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel together constitute the "staff" operationally defining the school community. Moreover, the effectiveness of the school is largely dependent upon this staff developing a sense of shared ownership of their school. Unless all members of the school are allowed to participate in the decision process affecting the school it is unlikely that a sense of shared ownership will develop. This is particularly the case during periods of change. During change periods it is not possible to rely upon tradition to impose normative consensus, rather consensus is the outcome of negotiation and compromise.

Teachers tend to focus on students and instructional practice. In order to develop a sense of ownership and community it is often desirable to begin with and build upon this orientation, while encouraging teachers to broaden their orientation to include school and community level issues. One effective strategy to facilitate an expanded sense of ownership is to begin with a school-wide discussion and investigation of student needs, instructional goals and practices. One might develop a profile of the school and then compare this profile of needs and practices with a normative ideal. Through such comparison one might identify areas in need of change or improvement. It is also likely that potential discontinuity between extant organizational structures and practices and those needed to facilitate implementation of desired reforms will become apparent. As issues are identified with implications for such activities as scheduling, allocation of time and financial resources, acquiring additional personnel and educational specialists, teachers will be provided with opportunities to enter traditionally management oriented decisional arenas. To successfully participate in these arenas may require training and experience, but the decisional arena itself comes to be seen as a natural extension of concern with the central educational mission of the school.

Within this context of understanding, the role of management is to facilitate the decisional process, not to make decisions for the school. Moreover, it is considered essential that all members of the school community recognize that the purpose of managerial decisions is to facilitate integration of curricular and instructional activities. Ms. Robinson was explicit in rejecting forms of authoritarian decision making regardless of the good intentions of persons occupying authoritative positions because such forms tend to deny ownership of decision and thus diminish the opportunities to establish an integrated, shared and coherent sense of the school community.

In summary, both Mr. Goldberg and Ms. Robinson addressed the importance of developing a school community and of the importance of teacher participation in school-wide decision making as a necessary condition for attaining a sense of community. Moreover, through decisional participation teachers gain understanding of the premises underlying school policy decisions. Such understanding is prerequisite for development of an integrated program of student intellectual and social development. Ms. Robinson is actively involved in facilitating development of school-based change programs and was therefore more oriented toward discussing strategies of change. The AFT is more inclined to leave the actual initiation and development of change to local school systems while encouraging such change by articulating a general theoretical position.

Organizational Changes Needed

Because the current organization of schools tends to be bureaucratic and inherently authoritarian there is need to modify the prevailing organizational framework. This theme was addressed most directly by Mr. Goldberg who observed that at present the greatest barriers to teacher participation are organizational. Schools tend to be organized along bureaucratic lines. Bureaucracy as an organizational form tends to suppress the emergence of democratic communities. To the extent that schools should become communities for inquiry, integrated with the surrounding community, the perpetuation of bureaucratic structures may be counter productive. Needed is movement to adopt more professional forms of organization. Alteration in social relationships and purpose at the superintendent and school board level may facilitate the adoption of more professional forms of school organization. At the superintendent level the greatest need is to adopt a role of facilitator of school level initiatives. At present district authority tends to be centralized at the central office and school board level. The superintendent typically serves to establish educational goals, to direct general school processes, and to

supervise schools with emphasis upon compliance with central office directives. While such an approach is "bureaucratic rational" it also tends to be disempowering to persons at the point of application and implementation. It encourages a "work to rule" mentality, directs employee attention to conformity with externally derived procedures rather than to organizational goals and purpose, and reduces individual initiative.

School boards may also need to adopt new roles. Many times school boards attempt to become "micro-managers" of the school system and of the schools. This is a self defeating activity. Most boards members lack intimate knowledge of the schools necessary for successful micro-management. Moreover, the tenure of board members limits their ability to develop that knowledge and sustain coherent implementation/supervision of schools. The board level is an appropriate location, however, to coordinate the activities of a school system with other community agencies and groups such as social and health services. Because so many of the problems facing schools are related to the general health and well being of the community, that is many of the problems encountered in schools have origins external to the schools, coordination of school, social and health services is acutely needed. In addition the society is becoming increasingly complex. It may be that greater diversity in educational services are needed. Such diversity may require greater differentiation and specialization among schools. Magnet schools and other choice plans may grow in significance in the near future. Coordination of schools adopting a variety of forms and offering specialized programs may become an important board activity. None of these suggested changes reduces the authority or significance of the policy making prerogatives of the school board, but does have implications for the types and level of policy making appropriate for board action.

Ms. Robinson was much more oriented toward school level organization in her comments. She expressed the view that bureaucratic forms of school organization were largely

inappropriate and that schools should attempt to adopt organizational forms more closely associated with the professions. In accomplishing this task it is of course necessary for school boards and central office administrators to support efforts toward professionalization. However, since it is too early in the restructuring strategy to offer general statements of what restructured schools should look like, it is counterproductive to specify the nature of changes needed at board and superintendent levels.

Personnel Attributes Needed

According to Mr. Goldberg the vision of schools as centers of inquiry, community and continuity, coupled with an image of teachers as professionals exercising professional discretion has implications for the personnel attributes required of teachers and administrators. At present teachers are treated largely as hired instructional technicians; principals as supervisors and middle level managers. As school systems have joined the restructuring parade they have tended to adopt a strategy of either mandating that each school "restructure" consistent with the system approved restructuring plan or they have allowed particular schools to restructure as a demonstration project. Neither strategy has met with resounding success. The first strategy tends to suffer from too much centralized direction, the latter strategy from not enough. Moreover, these strategies tend to be associated with attempts to redefine teachers and administrator roles before redefining organizational goals and objectives and facilitating organizational structures.

Needed is a simultaneous bottom-up and top-down approach. Most schools and teachers in those schools have never engaged in a restructuring effort before. There is uncertainty in how to begin and what issues are significant. Moreover, in many schools teachers do not share a single vision and philosophy of education. The consequence is that restructuring efforts may work at cross purposes. What is needed is an approach in which the central

office establishes the parameters of restructuring, directs/ encourages efforts to develop a common school-wide vision of education, and directs attention to significant educational issues while allowing schools the flexibility to create/define their own program and response. For example, among the parameters of restructuring appropriate for consideration at the district level are educational standards and outcome measures. The outcome measures identified at each restructuring school may, however, be expected to vary, especially during the initial years of restructuring. In order to facilitate restructuring efforts at the site level one should anticipate the need for additional resources especially time and money. Since restructuring is a change of the basic logic and relationships of organization one should anticipate that teachers will need considerable time to develop the habits of mind appropriate to restructuring. They will also need in-service training for participation in decisional arenas typically associated with governance and management. It may be appropriate to allow teachers to participate in the determination of the types of in-service training needed and the manner in which that training is to be provided.

Restructuring may also be expected to produce changes in the role of the principal. In some instances restructuring associated with increased participation by teachers in issues of governance and management have been considered an intrusion upon the authority of the principal. One may find, however, that the role of the principal does not decline in restructured schools but rather that the nature of the role undergoes revision. Most significant may be the need for principals to coordinate the activities of autonomous teacher councils and other work groups, to attend more closely to human resource management issues, and to identify special needs and select specialists to meet those needs as temporary employees. In addition the principal may find that as teachers become more involved in school level policy formation that the principal is freed to attend to issues associated with

community development and coordination. That is, the principal may be freed from internal management concerns to address other sets of responsibilities.

In Ms. Robinson's view school restructuring will require teachers to adopt new roles which include the following four dimensions: researcher, seeker, collaborator, and mentor/mentee. Identification of these role dimensions are not intended to refer to particular sets of activities and techniques but rather as general conceptual dimensions from which one derives activities. In addition these dimensions are to be understood as highly interactive. As a researcher the teacher should engage in exploration, analysis and critique of instructional, classroom and school level phenomena. As collaborator a teacher might wish to engage in joint research projects and to share the results of one's investigations with other members of the school and professional community. As a seeker the teacher should actively search for opportunities of challenge and change. Finally teachers should recognize that they possess expertise in some areas while their colleagues and students may possess expertise in others. As a community of scholars, each person may serve as both mentor and mentee in their relationships with others.

In addition to new roles for teachers, Ms. Robinson also identifies dimensions of the principals role. Of greatest importance are themes of facilitating the attainment of staff identified goals, empowering the faculty to participate in school wide decisional arenas, and unleashing the spirit. The latter refers to freeing the staff attitudinally to actively participate in reconstructing the social reality of the school. In developing this view of leadership Ms. Robinson was guided primarily by Harrison Owens' text Leadership Is.

Both Mr. Goldberg and Ms. Robinson recognize that teachers and principals' roles as currently exhibited are deeply rooted in past organizational structures. The situation for teachers is problematic because they may have developed over time attitudes of

dependency and subordination which serve as barriers to adoption of attitudes of independence and professional forms of social relationship. For principals the issue will be one of managing schools as they currently exist while simultaneously attempting to facilitate school movement toward adoption of professional forms of social relationship and organizational principle. To the extent that bureaucracy and professions are based upon contradictory organizational principles, the period of transition will be a difficult undertaking and one that will take considerable time to accomplish. In facilitating this transition it will be necessary for principals to emphasize the human relations and situational leadership aspects of management, while de-emphasizing in relative importance formal-rational aspects of bureaucratic management.

Academic Preparation Programs

In this area Mr. Goldberg and Ms. Robinson spoke with one voice. Neither address the specifics of change associated with master's, 6th year, and doctoral programs. The issue of academic preparation was considered to be so general that degree level distinctions were premature. Both respondents did suggest, however, that the academic preparation of teachers and principals may be expected to undergo alteration as restructuring grows in significance. The greatest need is to emphasize the development of reflective practice. The need is no longer simply to induce conformity to established practice among future teachers and administrators but rather to develop a critical analytic approach to the production of new practices. Educational programs should become more problem and issue oriented, case and situation analysis based. There should be greater emphasis upon adopting professional development schools and upon supervised clinical practice. The latter should not be read, however, as simply another call for expansion of internship and applied programs. To place a future teacher or administrator in an environment in which they are surrounded by practices characteristic of the schools we are attempting to change is self-defeating. Rather the need is for

very careful selection and placement in those settings which exhibit the desired practices. Since such settings may be in relatively short supply in the near future it may be necessary to place relatively greater emphasis upon developing within students attitudes and conceptual strategies associated with critical analysis and reflective practice. This may be accomplished within existing coursework through, for example, case and situation analysis, and through the expansion of coursework to include examination of research literature associated with organizational change and development.

To the extent that school restructuring will be successful only to the extent that persons entering education are able to exhibit the attributes associated with professional forms of organization, while also functioning in environments characterized by ambiguity and change, then it becomes incumbent upon the educational professorate to develop preparation programs designed to foster appropriate attitudes, skills and competencies. While many individuals among the professorate have initiated attempts to develop among their students attitudes of critical analysis, reflective practice, and knowledge of organizational change processes, the task ahead is to address at a programmatic level the changes necessary for educational transformation and renewal.

Interview Schedule
AFT and NEA Perspectives on
Shared Decision Making and Administration

Decision Types and Forms of Control

1. What types of decisions, management and instructional, are appropriate for shared decision making control by teachers?

2. Under what conditions might teachers share this control?

3. What forms (or degree) of control might teachers have over these decisions?

Organizational Changes Needed

4. What changes in the organization and operation of **schools** would be required for teachers to participate in control over decisions.

5. What changes in the organization and operation of **school systems** would be required for teachers to participate in control over decisions.

Personnel Attributes Needed

6. What personal, professional, and technical characteristics are needed by teachers for effective participation in shared decision making at the school or system level?

7. What personal, professional and technical characteristics are needed by persons in school and system level administrative positions to facilitate shared decision making control with teachers?

Academic Preparation Programs

8. What level and type of academic preparation to work in a position of shared decision making control should reasonably be expected of someone completing a good **master's degree** level program in administration leading to certification?

   ...a good 6th year program?

   ...a good doctoral program?

9. What additional experiences would an administrator need to prepare them to work in such a position?

10. What changes in preparation programs are needed to prepare administrators to work in systems with shared decision making?